

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (R-FL 13) met today with U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) Secretary James Nicholson. Buchanan discussed efforts to build a new national veterans cemetery in Sarasota County and other important priorities with Secretary Nicholson and the Under Secretaries for Health, Benefits, and Memorial Affairs.



“Significant progress has been made in the effort to locate a new national veterans cemetery in Sarasota County,” said Buchanan. “I thanked the Secretary for making the timely completion of this project a priority and look forward to working with him to provide area veterans with a final resting place that is close to home where they will be with respect and dignity.”

The VA has purchased 295 acres on Clark Road in Sarasota for the cemetery and the House has included \$27.8 million in federal funding for construction. Construction is expected to begin in May of 2008 with the first burials expected in the fall of that year. The freshman Congressman also stressed the health care needs of the District 97,000 veterans.

“Florida’s 13th District has the fifth largest veterans’ population in the nation,” said Buchanan. “As a member of Congress, one of my most important duties is to ensure that they get the health care and benefits they have earned. I have been impressed by the quality of care the VA provides at local clinics and at Bay Pines. Nevertheless, veterans have complained about the

length of time it takes to process claims and the distance they have to drive for some treatments. We discussed the need to provide comprehensive services locally and the need for additional staff in the region to more quickly process claims.”

Buchanan is a member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.